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FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4096
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0156
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY 0844
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0705
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA PRIORITY 0361
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY 0392
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000239

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/PHD, G/TIP, PM/PPA, AND INR/AA
AID/W FOR AFR/WA
TREASURY FOR SONIA RENANDO
ACCRA ALSO FOR WARP
LISBON ALSO FOR DAO
PARIS FOR POL - D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2016

TAGS: PINS FAID PGOV PHUM SNAR BR PU

SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: STILL CLINGING TO "FRAGILE STATE"
STATUS

REF: A. DAKAR 0168

1B. DAKAR 0154

Classified By: CDA ROBERT P. JACKSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D),

SUMMARY

11. (U) President Joao Bernardo &Nino8 Viera,s government has finally presented its program to the National Assembly, which effectively has until early March to approve or disapprove it. The Supreme Court ruled in Vieira,s favor on the appointment of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, which a faction of his own PAIGC continues to denounce as unconstitutional. Civil society is focused on an array of rights and development issues and relies heavily on foreign assistance. Meanwhile, the issue of drugs and security sector reform are taking center stage. During his first visit to Bissau, PolOff emphasized the need for compromise to end the political standoff and the need for security sector reform. END SUMMARY.

FIFTEEN DAYS OF WAITING ...

12. (C) In an important victory for President Vieira, the Supreme Court ruled that his dismissal of Prime Minister and political rival Carlos Domingos Gomes Junior was not unconstitutional. His selection of Aristides Gomes for the post will stand despite complaints from the divided African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC). The next big test for his government is the National Popular Assembly,s (ANP,s) vote on the government program, which was presented January 31. The Assembly, which is currently in session, has 15 days to approve or return the budget for changes. If changes are requested, the process repeats itself and if not approved the second time, the ANP must dissolve, and the Government must call new elections. Assembly Vice President Mamadu Iaia Djalo, who ran against Vieira in the presidential election and is in the PAIGC faction that does not support him, told us the program probably would be approved. He continued, though, to grouse that constitutional order was not followed in the appointment of the Prime Minister.

¶3. (C) Issues consistently raised by GOGB officials and the diplomatic corps included pleas for the United States to re-open its embassy; growing concern over narcotics trafficking from Colombia through Guinea-Bissau en route to Europe; and the primacy of security sector reform in the government's agenda. On instituting a permanent U.S. presence in country, the widely-held opinion is that no donor country will take Guinea-Bissau seriously until the Americans do. The Brazilian Charge declared, &This is as stable as it gets.⁸

... AS CIVIL SOCIETY SOLDIERS ON

¶4. (U) Poloff visited several recipients of U.S. foreign assistance, including two former Special Self-Help Fund projects (an orphanage and a school), a current Democracy and Human Rights Fund recipient that is bolstering civil legal procedures, and HIV/AIDS projects with Sant, Egidio and the Guinea-Bissau Social Marketing Association (AGMS), which are both funded by USAID's West Africa Regional Program. The impact of these projects, some of which also receive European funding, is impressive. Structures built with U.S. assistance stand out as a few shining beacons of progress amid the dust and dead cars that define Bissau's landscape. Project leaders and other civil society members with whom Poloff met are concerned about women's rights and political participation, trafficking of children for forced begging, and providing basic health care and education, especially in remote regions of the country that have little or no access to either.

COMMENT

DAKAR 00000239 002 OF 002

¶5. (SBU) If the government's program is approved by the National Assembly, there is hope for at least several more months of stability, which could pave the way for some political detente. President Vieira is wisely highlighting security sector reform in his agenda and getting buy-in from the military. His government has requested U.S. assistance on counternarcotics (Ref A) and staged a crack-down on organized crime, arresting hundreds in the city of Gabu near the Guinean border at the end of January. END COMMENT.

JACKSON